



News Release

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First Case of Zika Virus Disease Reported in Washington

Health officials urge heightened disease prevention awareness among travelers

OLYMPIA -- The Washington State Department of Health received confirmation today from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), that a Mason County man in his 20's, who visited a Thurston County hospital, is the first person in the state to test positive for Zika virus. The person recently traveled to the South Pacific before returning to Washington. People who've returned from Zika-affected areas who are pregnant or having symptoms of Zika illness should contact their healthcare provider.

"Because many people travel to and from places where Zika is spreading, we've been expecting to have imported cases of Zika virus disease," said Dr. Scott Lindquist, State Epidemiologist for Communicable Diseases for the Department of Health. "While the Zika virus is of greatest risk to pregnant women, it is understandably concerning to many of us. The good news is this virus spreads through the bite of a type of mosquito we don't have in Washington state, so it is very unlikely that this virus would spread widely here."

There is no vaccine to prevent Zika virus disease and no specific medical treatment for people who are infected. Health officials urge anyone considering traveling to countries where the virus is circulating to be aware of the need to protect themselves and others from mosquito bites. Pregnant women are encouraged to delay their travel, if possible, and to take mosquito bite prevention very seriously if they must travel to an area where mosquito-borne diseases are circulating. The mosquitoes that transmit Zika virus are daytime biters, so it is important to apply prevention measures throughout the day as well as during the evening hours.

Zika virus is almost always a very mild illness. About 80 percent of those infected never show symptoms of the disease, while about 1 in 5 people will have only mild symptoms, including fever, rash, joint pain, and red eyes that last a few days to a week.

There have been increased reports of cases of newborn microcephaly and other negative, pregnancy-related health outcomes possibly associated with Zika virus infections during pregnancy. Microcephaly is a condition where the head is smaller than normal and may lead to a child experiencing a variety of other health challenges including physical and speech functions, seizure, hyperactivity, coordination problems and other brain/neurological disorders.

Health officials advise women who are pregnant or who may become pregnant to consider delaying travel or to be especially careful in avoiding mosquito bites in Zika-affected areas.

Across the U.S. thousands of college students, members of faith organizations, healthcare professionals and others are now planning spring trips to warmer locations for fun or charity work. Travel can be a safe, healthy, and enjoyable activity, but it's important to protect yourself and your family while traveling. Avoid diseases spread by mosquitoes by making prevention an essential part of planning for a trip. The list of Zika-affected areas includes many countries in the Caribbean and South and Central America. The list changes frequently; but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention keep an updated list on [their Website](#).

The Washington State Department of Health recommends travelers protect themselves against mosquito bites by:

- Applying EPA-registered insect repellants to skin following label instructions.
- Wearing long-sleeved shirts and pants and closed shoes or boots instead of sandals.
- Using bed nets in remote locations lacking window screens and/or air conditioning. These should reach the floor or be tucked under the mattress.
- Avoiding perfumes, colognes and products with fragrances that might attract mosquitoes.
- Using clothing, shoes, bed nets and camping gear that contain permethrin. Permethrin-treated clothing repels and kills mosquitoes and other pests and retains this effect after repeated washing. Some clothing is available pretreated with permethrin; Permethrin should not be used directly on skin.

While public health and medical professionals know a lot about many mosquito-borne diseases, there is still much that is not yet known about Zika virus disease, including its transmission through sex, blood, and other avenues. The department of health is tracking the virus and has updated information on its [Zika virus webpage](#).

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*. Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

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